

Report following monitoring

Level of follow-up: Significant improvement

St James Primary

**Lansbury Park
Caerphilly
Caerphilly
CF83 3GT**

Date of visit: October 2025

by

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and
Training in Wales**

Outcome of visit

St. James Primary School is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

As a result, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from the list of schools requiring significant improvement.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Ensure that all teachers support and challenge pupils appropriately so that they make effective progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills

Leaders have established a more coherent and structured approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Teachers are refining their practice to ensure greater consistency in developing and applying pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, pupils are beginning to understand more clearly how these skills connect across different areas of learning and how to use them effectively in a range of contexts. This is leading to improvements in pupils' confidence, independence, accuracy, and the progress they make in developing their literacy and numeracy skills.

A strong strategic focus on literacy, supported by well-planned professional learning and guidance from external partners, has deepened teachers' understanding of progression in reading and writing and pupils' outcomes in literacy are beginning to show measurable improvement.

Leaders have recently introduced a targeted programme of professional learning to strengthen the teaching of mathematics. This work is helping to promote a shared understanding of progression and higher expectations for pupils' progress in mathematics. Teachers are beginning to plan more effectively to support and challenge pupils at appropriate levels. Although these approaches are at an early stage of implementation, there are emerging signs of a more consistent and ambitious approach to developing pupils' mathematic and numeracy skills. Where practice is strongest, lessons are carefully matched to pupils' needs, providing a purposeful balance of support and challenge. Pupils engage with their work positively, apply their skills confidently and make steady progress. In lessons, where teaching is less effective, teachers place too much emphasis on completing tasks and do not ensure that pupils' make the progress they should.

In the Specialist Resource Bases (SRBs), staff are refining how they adapt learning to meet individual pupils' needs more precisely. Leaders recognise the need to continue evaluating

how effectively teaching supports pupils in the SRBs to make sustained progress over time.

R2. Improve self-evaluation so that it focuses closely on identifying the impact of improvement strategies and professional learning on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress

Following the core inspection leaders have worked effectively with staff and governors to begin addressing the recommendations. They have focused appropriately on strengthening the school's capacity to evaluate performance and drive improvement.

With valuable support from external partners, leaders have refined monitoring and evaluation processes to better assess the impact of professional learning and improvement strategies on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. This enables leaders to identify strengths and areas for development with increasing precision.

To strengthen leadership capacity and promote a culture of reflective practice, the headteacher has extended the leadership team to include middle leaders in focused monitoring activities such as learning walks, book scrutiny and discussions with pupils and staff. This well-considered approach enhances middle leaders' confidence and accountability. It has successfully developed their ability to evaluate the quality of provision with greater accuracy and identify priorities for improvement. As a result, professional dialogue across the school is more purposeful, self-evaluation is sharper, and there is clear evidence of improvement in the consistency and quality of teaching and learning.

Leaders use evaluation findings well to identify strengths and areas for development in teaching. They share this information openly with staff and take prompt action to address any weaknesses. Where needed, they provide targeted support to help teachers improve their practice. This approach promotes accountability and contributes to a culture of ongoing improvement in teaching and learning.

Overall, governors' involvement in school self-evaluation is developing appropriately. Leaders provide regular reports about the school's progress against the recommendations, and through their increased engagement with the school, governors are deepening their understanding of its work and performance.

R3. Reduce the level of persistent absentees

Leaders have developed robust systems for tracking and analysing attendance, which ensure that pupils at risk of persistent absence are identified and supported promptly. This strategic approach has led to early improvements in overall attendance figures and a growing reduction in the number of persistent absentees. Pupils' attendance remains a

high priority and features prominently in school improvement planning, staff meetings and pupil progress discussions, ensuring a consistent whole-school focus that is steadily securing improvements in attendance and reducing persistent absence.

Leaders and staff adopt a co-ordinated, community-focused approach to supporting families. School leaders work effectively with the local authority and a wide range of external agencies, including social services, the youth service, and family support organisations, to provide targeted guidance and specialist support. These partnerships help to address barriers to attendance and promote pupils' well-being.

Leaders make thorough use of attendance data to identify patterns and evaluate the impact of strategies. Regular tracking and review meetings enable staff to intervene promptly when concerns arise. As a result, overall attendance has improved compared with previous years.

Despite these positive developments, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent remains too high. Leaders recognise the need to continue refining strategies to engage pupils and their families more effectively, ensuring that improvements in attendance are sustained.

R4. Ensure that the school's curriculum provides pupils with meaningful learning experiences that enable them to make consistent and systematic progress

Since the core inspection, leaders have worked collaboratively and reflectively to strengthen the school's curriculum. They have worked closely with staff to co-construct a curriculum that reflects local needs and supports the four purposes of Curriculum for Wales. Leaders and teachers now place a strong emphasis on understanding why different learning experiences are important for pupils. Through professional discussion and curriculum planning, they explore the purpose and intended impact of learning activities, considering how these contribute to pupils' progress over time. This reflective approach helps staff to design learning that is more meaningful and coherent, ensuring that pupils understand the relevance of what they are learning. As a result, the curriculum is being developed with greater clarity, depth and intentionality.

Leaders have developed a progressive curriculum framework that underpins teachers' planning, promoting more coherent development of pupils' knowledge and skills. Teachers provide authentic learning experiences that connect to pupils' lives, the locality and Welsh heritage. Leaders continue to strengthen the curriculum to ensure learning is purposeful and supports pupils to make systematic progress in areas, such as science and humanities.

However, planning for pupils' learning experiences in expressive arts and for independent learning, particularly for younger pupils, is not developed well enough. As a result, opportunities for pupils to be creative, think deeply and apply their skills with increasing independence are inconsistent across the school.

Leaders prioritise professional learning to support curriculum implementation effectively. This has improved teachers' confidence and understanding, particularly in developing pupils' writing. As a result, pupils' written work, especially older pupils, shows improving quality. Although recent work to strengthen pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding is developing suitably, pupils' ability to apply these skills confidently and consistently across the curriculum is not yet secure.